

Tips for Teens

The Truth About Marijuana

Slang: Weed, Pot, Grass, Reefer, Ganja, Mary Jane, Blunt, Joint, Roach, Nail



Marijuana affects your brain. THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) affects and damages the nerve cells in the part of the brain where memories are formed, making it hard to remember things.

Marijuana affects your self-control. Marijuana can seriously affect your sense of time and your ability to do things that require coordination – like driving. In 1998, nearly 77,000 people were admitted to emergency rooms suffering from marijuana-related problems. This was an increase of more than 373 percent since 1991.

Marijuana affects your lungs. There are more than 400 known chemicals in marijuana. A single joint contains four times as much cancer-causing tar as a filtered cigarette.

Marijuana also affects other aspects of your health. Marijuana can limit your body's ability to fight off infection. It can increase your heart rate and lead to frequent chest colds. Some research even shows that long-term marijuana use can increase the risk of developing certain mental illnesses.

Marijuana is not always what it seems. Before it is sold, marijuana can be laced with other dangerous drugs without your knowledge. "Blunts" – hollowed-out cigars filled with marijuana – sometimes have substances such as crack cocaine, PCP, or embalming fluid added to them.

Marijuana can be addictive. As with alcohol and many other drugs, not everyone who uses marijuana becomes addicted, but some users do develop signs of dependence on the drug. They may experience such withdrawal symptoms as loss of appetite, sleep problems, weight loss, and shaky hands. In 1995, 165,000 people entered drug treatment programs to kick their marijuana habit.



Know the law. It is illegal to buy or sell marijuana. In most states, holding even small amounts of marijuana can lead to fines or arrest.]

Get the facts. There is NO proof that smoking marijuana is healthy and tons of evidence that it is not healthy. Smoking any substance – tobacco, marijuana, or crack

cocaine – increases your risk of developing pneumonia and other illnesses.

Stay informed. It has not yet been proven that using marijuana leads to using other drugs. But, the fact is that very few people use other drugs without first using marijuana. Teens who smoke marijuana are more likely to try other drugs, in part because they have more contact with people who use and sell them.

Know the risks. Using marijuana or other drugs increases your risk of injury from car crashes, falls, burns, drownings, and other accidents.

Be in charge. Marijuana affects your judgment, drains your motivation, and can make you feel anxious.

Keep your edge. Marijuana can give you bloodshot eyes and smelly hair and clothes.

Look around you. Most teens aren't smoking marijuana. According to a 1997 study, four out of five 12- to 17-year-old youth had never even tried marijuana.



How can you tell if a friend is using marijuana? Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using marijuana:

- Seeming dizzy and having trouble walking
- Having red, bloodshot eyes

- Having a hard time remembering things that just happened
- Acting disinterested in school, family, or activities he or she used to enjoy
- Acting silly for no apparent reason
- Changing groups of friends
- Changing school grades or behavior

What can you do to help someone who is using marijuana or other drugs? Be a real friend. Encourage your friend to seek professional help.



***Q.** Isn't smoking marijuana less dangerous than smoking cigarettes?*

A. No. It's even worse. One joint affects the lungs as much as four cigarettes.

***Q.** Can people become addicted to marijuana?*

A. Yes. Research confirms you can become hooked on marijuana.

***Q.** Can marijuana help cure cancer?*

A. No. Some people with cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases claim to experience relief from pain and other symptoms that they attribute to marijuana use. However, scientific research has not yet confirmed these benefits and more research on this topic is being done. What is known is that smoking marijuana can cause lung damage.



To learn more about Marijuana or
obtain referrals to programs in your
community, contact:

**Resource Center
State of California
Department of Alcohol and Drug
Programs
1700 K Street, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814**

(800) 879-2772 (California Only)

(916) 327-3728

FAX: (916) 323-1270

TTY: (916) 445-1942

Internet: <http://www.adp.state.ca.us>

E-Mail: ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us

Publication No. (ADP) 00-8044